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Superfund session tonight

By Michael Wright

The Facts

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FREEPORT — The Environmental Protection Agency will host a "public availability" tonight to answer questions about a Superfund site in the Bridge Harbor subdivision.

The EPA designated the old Gulfco Marine Maintenance facility as a Superfund site in 2003, but cleanup hasn't started.

The Superfund is a trust fund financed through fines on polluters. Superfund money, which is running out, is used to clean up a contaminated site when the responsible party either can't be found or is broke.

Tonight's meeting is a chance for residents to ask agency representatives questions about the cleanup, said Cynthia Fanning, a spokeswoman for EPA's Region 6 office, which includes Texas.

"They're not coming out to make a presentation or give new information," Fanning said.

Bobby Jo Casale, who has a house in Bridge Harbor and has been fighting for years to get someone to clean up the site, said he will be there, but he's not sure what to expect.

"They've been going through my files for the last few months, gathering data as to what has occurred in the past and we gave them a whole lot of information," Casale said.

Freeport Mayor Jim Phillips said he's become a bit frustrated by the agency's slow response.

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality studies in 2000 and 2001 identified dozens of contaminants in the soil, such as semivolatile organic compounds, lead, zinc and pesticides.

The EPA issued the Superfund designation in 2003. Since then, the agency has been working to identify the responsible parties.

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"I hope to find out what they think the degree of contamination is and what it's contaminated with and what they're going to do for remediation," Phillips said. "I won't be surprised at nothing that happens, or nothing that don't happen."

The meeting starts at 6 p.m. at the Bridge Harbor Yacht Center, 411 Sailfish Lane in Freeport.

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